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1827

Dissertation on the  
Nature History and Treatment  
of Hepatitis

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of Pennsylvania

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Exposition on the

Water Supply and Drainage

of the

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An Inaugural Essay  
Nothing but the imperious necessity of  
preparing a dissertation on some medical  
subject, previously to obtaining the degree of  
Doctor of Medicine, could have induced  
me to appear before you in the character of  
an author; but in obedience to the laws of  
this University, of which I have the honour  
to be a Student, I have thrown together a  
few hasty remarks on the nature, History, and  
treatment of Hepatitis. On such an occasion no-  
thing new, profound, or highly polished can be  
expected from one, who has as yet acquired but  
little from observation or experience.

Nature and History of Hepatitis  
Hepatitis or inflammation of the liver, is a  
disease of Southern rather than of Northern  
climates, and of a low and flat, rather than  
of a high and hilly country.



It may be expected in all places where bilious fever is a prevailing malady. Hence, it is frequently found in the miasmatic sections of the Southern States, particularly the Carolinas and Georgia, and <sup>the</sup> whole range of the West India Islands. It is said to be still more frequent in the British provinces, in India. There it would appear to be a real endemic almost as much, as the intermittent fever in certain sections of the United States. It is a disease much to be dreaded throughout the world especially in low, flat, and marshy countries.

Hepatitis is chiefly confined to adults; children, and those under the age of puberty, being rarely affected with it, at least in the United States. It attacks females as well as males, and intemperate persons ~~persons~~ are particularly liable to its ravages, a



drunkard in the torrid zone rarely escapes this disease.

Hepatitis has been ~~now~~ divided by systematic writers into two kinds, acute, and chronic. It is ranked, by Professor Chapman, under the secretory system. I shall confine myself in the following observations to the acute form of this disease, which is violent in its nature and rapid in its progress.

### Symptoms

Acute Hepatitis is frequently preceded by an affection of the Stomach. This for the most part, is so inconsiderable as not to excite alarm; or to excite much uneasiness. Its formal attack is ushered in with a sense of chilliness, succeeded by pain in the right hypochondrium extending to the Navicle and shoulder; the pain being





sometimes sharp at others dull. The pain occasioned by Hepatitis is increased by pressure upon the region of the liver, and is accompanied with a cough, difficulty of breathing and great uneasiness by lying on the left side. This is sometimes the case with the right side also, and the patient is obliged to lie on his back, afflicted with nausea and sickness, and often with a vomiting of bilious matter, the tongue is covered with a yellowish fur, the patient complains of loss of appetite, and great thirst; the pulse is strong, hard and frequent, the skin hot and dry; the bowels generally constipated, at times, very obstinately so.

(Occasionally however the reverse is the case)  
The urine is high coloured, depositing a yellowish sediment; and when the disease has continued for some time, the skin and eyes assume a yellowish tint.

When great difficulty of breathing prevails



attended with sharp lancinating pain in the commencement, resembling that of Pleurisy, the disease originates in the membranes covering the liver. But if the pain is dull, the parenchyma of the liver is principally affected, and is more liable to run into Suppuration.

### Termination.

Hepatitis terminates in resolution, adhesion, suppuration, ulceration or effusion. Resolution and adhesion are the most favourable terminations of Hepatitis, and generally take place where the proper remedies have been administered in time.

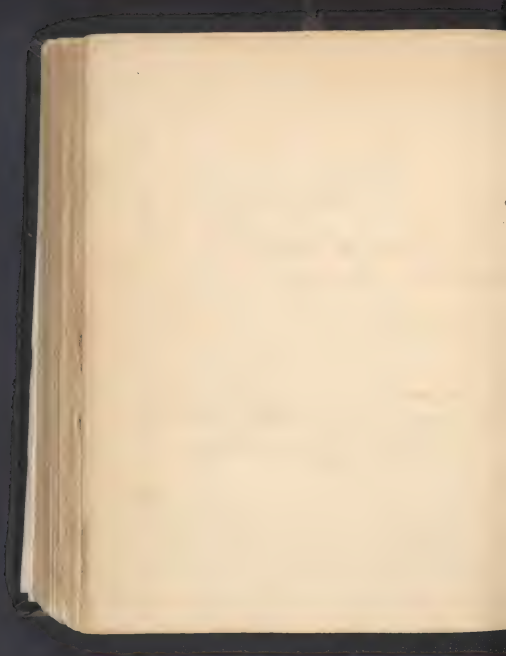
Suppuration, having taken place, a communication, in most instances, is effected between the intestines and ~~liver~~ biliary liver, or between the abscess and biliary ducts, through which the matter passes



into the intestines, and is discharged  
by stool. In some cases an ulcerated  
fistula is established between the  
liver and diaphragm, and the pus  
is discharged into the chest, or coughed  
up from the lungs. By whatever vent  
the matter escapes, whether through  
~~through~~ the abdominal muscles or by  
the internal passages, it generally happens  
that through the medium of the adhesive  
braces it is enclosed in a cyst, and so  
the adjoining parts are secured from dan-  
gers. Sometimes however, effusion takes  
place, from rupture, and the patient dies.

### Of the Causes producing Hepatitis

Hepatitis may arise from any cause  
producing a strong irritation, in the liver,  
either directly, or through the medium  
of sympathy. In speaking of the causes



producing Hepatitis directly, a contusion on the region of the liver, from blows, falls, or inordinate pressure, ought to be mentioned first, together with gunshot wounds, and those produced by cutting and piercing instruments as well as lacerations of the liver from other causes. There have been instances in which worms produced inflammation in this organ; and supuration having taken place, the greater part of the liver has been destroyed.

The causes which excite Hepatitis by sympathy, appear to be numerous. They make their first impression on some other part of the body; as for instance, the stomach, skin and head; which being transferred to the liver by consent of parts produce Hepatitis. In enumerating the causes by which the liver is affected through the medium of the stomach, ~~it next~~ I shall





mention marsh effluvia as the most common; it being well known, that in most intermittent, and remittent fevers, the liver is very sensibly affected. The irritation in these maladies may certainly be traced to the stomach, and on that organ the primary impression is made; and that impression being communicated by sympathy to the liver produces Hepatitis. ~~It~~ It would be superfluous to mention other poisons, as their modes of operation must proceed in a similar manner; therefore, I shall pass them over unnoticed.

Cold is the cause of almost all the diseases in hot climates. We then therefore that when the pores have been actively opened by the extreme heat of a vertical sun, perspiratory and biliary secretion must be much increased; and



the body being suddenly exposed to a strong current of cool air, perspiration must of course be quickly checked, and the liver being known to be easily affected; Hepatitis is apt to take place.

Again, the increased action of the perspiratory, and visceri vessels, occasions a loss of tone in them, by which their fluids continue to be poured out, after the cause has ceased to operate. Under these circumstances it happens that the application of the slightest degree of cold is productive of danger. Not only is the animal heat too rapidly abstracted, but the extremities on the surface, are rendered torpid. The perspiratory and visceri secretions are arrested; the passage of the blood through the liver is obstructed, and a temporary congestion throughout the portal vein is the result.

It is mentioned by a writer of the highest



authority ~~showing~~ that injuries of the head  
have produced Hepatitis. And to this opinion  
I must refer you.

### Diagnosis

As Hepatitis is liable to be mistaken for  
Pleuripneumonia, care must be taken to dis-  
tinguish them. This may be easily done  
by observing that in Hepatitis the pain  
in the side is less acute, and extending  
to the top of the shoulder, the difficulty  
of respiration is not so great, the cough  
more dry, and the functions of the stomach  
more deranged. There is also in Hepatitis  
a yellowish tint of the eyes & a change of  
colour in the skin which are not so ob-  
servable in pleuripneumonia.

It may be easily distinguished from Gas-  
tritis by observing the great prostration & weakness  
the smallness of the pulse, the case is violent  
to vomiting and the burning sensation.



in the stomach in Gastritis. Moreover the dragging sensation, which is most commonly felt in Hepatitis and the uneasiness complained of by the patient whilst lying on his side, will sufficiently distinguish these diseases.

### Prognosis

The subsidence of the pyrexial symptoms, the complexion gaining its natural aspect, the strength not much impaired, return of appetite and the different functions of the body returning to their wonted offices may be considered favourable.

But continuance of pain and fever with obstinate constipation are indicative of an increase of the disease. Severe rigours succeeded by flushes of heat and hectic fever denote suppuration; continued hiccough, cold extremities, with a sinking pulse indicate dissolution.

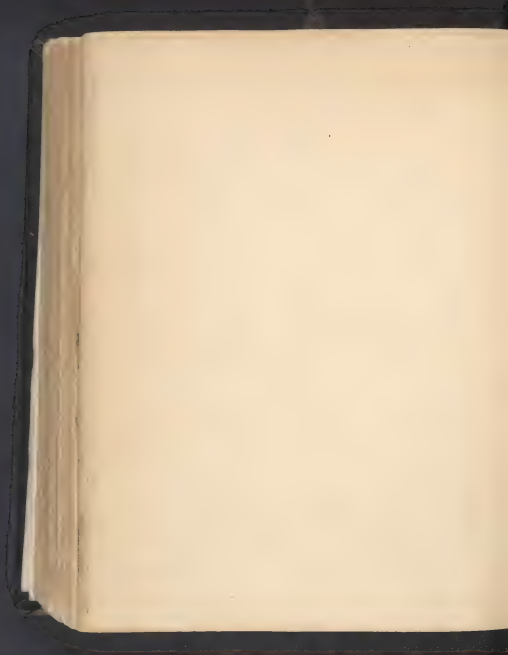




## Treatment

Acute Hepatitis, requires for its cure, the antiphlogistic mode of treatment, promptly pursued. Blood must be copiously taken in a given time, to an extent not common and scarcely warranted in other diseases.

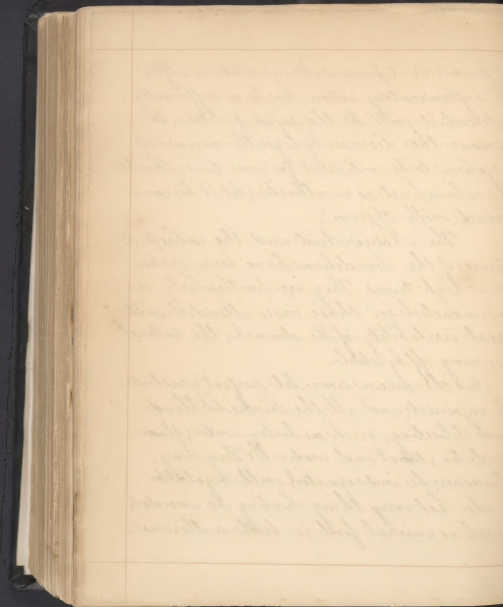
Twenty or thirty ounces may be drawn off from the arm at once, and the operation repeated according to the circumstances, and habits of the patient. Cups or leeches, or both should be liberally applied to the region of the liver, and a large blister laid on the same as soon as the febrile action is sufficiently subdued. Simultaneous with these remedies, let copious and repeated purging be used; Mercurial purges quickened in their action by jalap, are highly useful. With these saline purges ought to be occasionally alternated; such as a strong infusion of senna containing



Glauber or Epsom salts in solution. After the inflammatory action has been sufficiently reduced, it will be the safest practice, to remove the disease by a gentle mercurial ptyalism to be continued for some time. Should the calomel act as a cathartic, let it be combined with Opium.

The Nitric Acid and the expressed juice of the Dandelion have been spoken of in high terms. They are particularly recommended in those cases attended with great irritability of the stomach, the calomel running off by stool.

In the mean time let perfect quietude be enjoined, and all the drinks be bland and diluting, such as barley-water, flax-seed tea, toast and water &c. They may, however, be impregnated with vegetable acids. Let every thing heating be avoided, such as animal food in broth or otherwise.



Should suppuration take place and the abscess point externally <sup>the matter</sup> ~~may~~ be let out with a common lancet bistoury or trocar. When the matter has found its way into the chest, let it be discharged through the intercostal muscles by an operation, and the external wound be healed as soon as the discharge has so far diminished, as to render its reproduction improbable. After the discharge of the matter, the patient's strength should be supported by tonics and a good diet. The patient should be protected by appropriate clothing.

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